The Light that Failed

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED.

Matthew 25:8 Our lamps are going out.

The wedding after the custom of Palestine. Ten maidens take their lamps and go to the bridegroom's home to await the home coming of bride and groom. Long wait. They sleep. At midnight the cry. "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet meet him.

Five had carefully examined their lamps beforehand but the others five had not. When they hurriedly lit theri lamps to go forth five burned brightly, but the other five began to go out.

Then the five foolish virgins made the embarrassing request, "Give us of your oil, our lamps are going out." But the wise ones answer, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us all."

Then the five wise ones take their lamps and rush forth to meet the bridal procession and with it enter the house. But when the five foolish virgins return later, having gone forth to purchase oil, the door was shut and they were refused admittance.

I. What is the symbolism of the oil and the lamps?

1. In the O.T. the oil represents Divine approval and appointment. The priests set apart with unction by holy oil.

The 133 rd Psalm affirms that "The dwelling of brethren together in unity is like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard."

The King of Israel referred to as "The Lord's ~~Ann~~ annointed."

Sechariah's vision of thetwo olive trees upon the right side of the candle stick and the two golden spouts that emptied the oil. These represent the two annointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. The intrepretation of the whole vision is in the thrilling sentence, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

2. In the N.T. the same meaning holds. Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as "the lamp that burneth and sh shineth." The very word Christ means "the annointed one". Then the light that failed, according to the symbolism of the Lord's parable of the Ten Virgins is the flickering and fading Spirit of God in the

of men and women.

Did you ever observe the going out of a lamp burning up its last drop of oil? First ~~there is~~ a ~~reddish light~~ the bright white light turns to dull red, then it shoots out yellowish streaks, the flame grows weaker and weaker and finally puffs out, leaving only a few glowing sparks and a line of smpke.

How very much like a death-bed scene- the shortening breath, the feeble pulse, the fluttering spark of vitality, then darkness and the end.

"Late, so late! and dark the night and chill;
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now."

II. "Out lamps are going out."

Observe the gradual failing of the flames. The Revised Version has it right,"Going out" instead of "Gone out".

Just as the light of a lamp burning up its last oil goes out gradually so, as a rule, is man's spiritual decline. Our falling away from God is gradual. The First Psalm has it indicated in its opening words, A man first walks with the ungodly, the stands in the way of sinners, and finally sits in the seat of the scornful.

Like the dying lamp is the gradual fading away of our spiritual power, our spiritual discernment, our spiritual uungering~~s~~ and thirsting.

Perhaps first in our conduct we fail to act in a Christian way, then we fall away from reading the Bible, we neglect to pray and do not attend our church services so regularly, we cast aside one Xn responsibility and duty after another until the flickering flame of God's Spirit within us sputtersa few times and then fails to arise again.

Some, because of habit, keep up the forms of Xn worship, but the flame of the Sprit is burning low, and when a severe crisis comes upon them, they are overwhelmed.

III. The light that failed was the result of carelessness and neglect.

The five foolish virgins did not intentionally neglect to look after their lamps. They were thinking about other things. They were notnthinking about oil at all. They took it for granted that their lamps were alright.

Many of us do the same thing. We think about anything and everything except our spiritual condition. We think we are alright and just go ahead with the procession of life expecting to enter in the the full enjoyments of experience, never dreaming that we may find the door shut.

For example I have in mind a certain man who is typical. A nominal member of the church, but not wholly surrendered to Christ, who thru neglect failed to provide for the deeper things of life. He seldom prayed, never thinking of taking to God in prayer his problems and difficulties. The Sunday newspaper and the popular story kept his Bible closed. He was not interested in the building of God's kingdom either at home or abroad. His companions and associates were not chosen from the ranks of earnest followers of Christ, but from the word's frivolous and gay ones. Then he was called upon to pass thru some very bitter experiences. A great temptation came to him, and not accustomed to submit everything to God in prayer he was swept under and utterly ruined. Because he had neglected to keep the Spirit gf God supplied within him, because he gradually became stranger to things spititual, at the approach of calamity he found his lamp going out, and in his drisis he was overcome in utter darkness.

IV. What is the significance of the five who refused to share their oil? Some believe theirs to have been a selfish adt.

It is possible to pour oil from one lamp to another but it is not possible to transfer the spiritual graces and power from those wh have cultivated God in their lives to those who are not prepared to receive them and who could not use them if they wished.

Whereas it is true that only God can kindle His Spirit within us, nevertheless, those who have spiritual power can help to revive the failing light in the lives of others.

Norman Duncan's many tales of the Frozen North, of the brave Newfound fishermen who risk ther lives evey time they go forth for a catch. On one Duncan tells of a crew of brave men who were caught in a raging storm and cast upon an island only to face being frozen to death. All the matches they had were water soaked. While making careful swarch one of the men founhd a broken match but dry and good. He was told to start a fire with it, but, realizing how much was at stake,